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MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT EXPANDING MENU OPTIONS FOR STREET FOOD VENDING CARTS

New Options Will Encourage Healthy, Multicultural Food Choices

TORONTO - The McGuinty government is giving municipalities the option to expand the types of food street vendors can sell to give Ontarians more interesting, healthy and safe food choices, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

"Ontarians are at our best when we embrace the diversity of our people and our culture," said Smitherman. "By expanding street menus, we are making it possible for our food options to reflect our multiculturalism. We are also helping a new group of entrepreneurs showcase their culture's culinary contribution to their cities."

The government has amended the Food Premises Regulation (O. Regulation 562) to allow expanded menu options for street food vendors that will take effect on August 1, 2007:

- Pre-prepared, pre-packaged foods such as salads, fruits and baked goods;
- Pre-cooked foods that are reheated on site such as samosas, pizzas, burritos, hamburgers and hot dogs;
- Lower-risk foods such as orange juice, corn on the cob, whole fruit and non-dairy smoothies;
- Local Medical Officers of Health will also have the discretion to approve additional menu items if they are satisfied that safeguards are in place to protect the public.

"These new options will help street food vendors be more creative in their menu offerings, "said Susur Lee, internationally renowned chef and author. "It will put Ontario on the culinary map by showcasing our province's great talent and diversity."

Municipalities will still be responsible for determining licensing requirements, which includes menus and locations. Like other food premises, the food vending carts will be subject to food safety inspections.

This type of regulation puts Ontario at the forefront of other Canadian jurisdictions. Enabling expanded menus is likely to create opportunities for small businesses and have a positive impact on tourism. Outside Canada, many large cities such as New York and Washington D.C. already have policies in place that support diverse street food.

Today's initiative is part of the McGuinty government's plan for innovation in public health care, building a system that delivers on three priorities – keeping Ontarians healthy, reducing wait times and providing better access to doctors and nurses.

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For more information on achievements in health care, visit: www.resultsontario.gov.on.ca.

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